



U.S. House of Representatives Committee on the Judiciary

F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr., Chairman

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News Advisory

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Contact: Jeff Lungren/Terry Shawn
202-225-2492

Sensenbrenner: House Passes Violence Against Women Act Reauthorization

Measure Now Goes to President Bush for His Signature

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The House today by voice vote approved legislation reauthorizing the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). The VAWA reauthorization is included in H.R. 3402, which authorizes Justice Department programs for fiscal years 2006-2009 and implements much-needed reforms to the Department's grant programs. Because the Senate approved this legislation yesterday, H.R. 3402 now goes to President Bush for his signature. House Judiciary Committee Chairman F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr. (R-Wis.), the sponsor of H.R. 3402, delivered the following remarks on the House floor:

“Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 3402, the “Department of Justice Appropriations Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2009.”

“As Chairman of the Committee on Judiciary, I am proud to support this comprehensive package negotiated between the House and Senate to reauthorize vital programs within the Department of Justice to combat domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. I am grateful to the Committees on Financial Services, Energy and Commerce, and Education and Workforce, as well as the Members of the Committee on Judiciary, for working with us to make it possible for us to bring up this legislation today. I would also like to thank the original bipartisan cosponsors of this bill, Judiciary Committee Ranking Member Conyers, and Representatives Green, Solis, Brown-Waite, Schiff, Coble, Lofgren, and Weiner for their efforts.

“Authorization is an important oversight tool that allows Congress and committees of jurisdiction to create, amend, extend, and set priorities for programs within executive agencies. Despite the law's requirement for regular Congressional authorization of the

Justice Department, until recently DOJ had not been formally authorized by Congress since 1980. The Committee on the Judiciary took action to rectify the situation in the 107th Congress and reauthorized the programs within the Department of Justice. We tried again last Congress; however, the other body did not take up our bipartisan House-passed bill. I am proud to be here today to provide Congress with legislation to again give direction to the Department of Justice and the important programs it administers.

“The Department of Justice’s grant programs are an important tool in the fight against crime in America. Programs such as Byrne, COPS, and STOP provide grants to State and local governments to focus on current crime issues affecting our communities. Because there are limited resources, continuous Congressional oversight of these programs ensures that the taxpayers money is spent appropriately.

“H.R. 3402 will ensure accountability from the Department with a number of provisions designed to ensure grant recipients are meeting the conditions established by Congress for the programs. The bill includes an Office of Audit, Assessment, and Management to monitor grants and a Community Capacity Development Office to assist grant applicants and grantees in meeting grant conditions.

“In addition to the numerous oversight tools provided in the bill, there are a number of important reforms of grant programs and provisions designed to improve programs and offices within the Department. The bill consolidates the Local Law Enforcement Block Grant program and the Byrne grant program into one program with the same purposes to eliminate duplication and improve administration of the grants. The bill preserves the COPS program, but addresses concerns expressed by many Members about the previous use of the these grants. H.R. 3402 also allows grantees greater flexibility in the use of these funds.

“The legislation also reauthorizes DOJ programs that will expire or have expired such as the Juvenile Accountability Block Grants program and the Sex Offender Management program. It also includes some very important modifications to the criminal code such as extending the statute of limitations for human trafficking offenses and applying increased criminal penalties to prison guards who sexually abuse persons in their custody.

“Titles one through nine of this bill focus on reauthorizing, expanding, and improving programs that were established in the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 and reauthorized in 2000. The bill reauthorizes some important core programs such as STOP grants and grants to reduce campus violence. These programs have been successful in combating domestic violence and changing attitudes toward violence in the family in America.

“The reauthorization of VAWA in 2005 will continue to change attitudes toward domestic violence and will expand its focus to change attitudes toward other violent crimes including dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. Because these crimes affect both genders, it is important to note that the text of the legislation specifies that programs addressing these problems should serve both female and male victims.

“Additionally, this legislation specifies that the same rules apply to these funds as to other Federal grant programs. It is illegal to use the grant funds devoted to these programs for political activities or lobbying. It is the intent of Congress that these funds be used to provide services to victims and train personnel who deal with these violent crimes. The Department of Justice is expected to enforce that provision for all its grants and monitor grant activities to ensure compliance not only with this condition, but all the conditions of the grants.

“This legislation will aid Congress in continuing to fulfill our obligation to the taxpayers to be good stewards of their money. I encourage my colleagues to support this bipartisan legislation.”

Highlights of H.R. 3402

- Authorizes appropriations for the Department of Justice for fiscal years 2006 through 2009
- Implements reforms to the Department’s grant programs
- Creates a privacy officer at the Justice Department who must report to Congress on alleged privacy violations by the Department, is responsible for coordinating the Department’s privacy efforts, and ensures the Department complies with all applicable federal privacy laws and regulations
- Establishes an office to ensure grant money is used appropriately and to reduce waste, fraud, and abuse in grant programs
- Reauthorizes for 2007-2011 core programs from the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 and 2000 and makes improvements to those grant programs to enhance the ability to combat domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking
- Authorizes grants to train medical personnel in dealing with victims of these crimes
- Authorizes prevention grants designed to educate communities on the realities of these crimes
- Reauthorizes the STOP program, which provides state formula grants that help fund collaborative efforts between police and prosecutors and victim services providers
- Reauthorizes grants with the goal of police officers aggressively arresting abusers who commit acts of violence or violate protection orders
- Authorizes new grants to improve training for court officials and law enforcement.

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